

Cousins of the Ampersand

7

The Tironian et - a stylized shorthand form of Latin et popularly credited to Cicero's scribe Marcus Tullius Tiro from the first century BC. It is still used in Irish and Scottish Gaelic.

+

Plus sign - a hand-written et-ligature used in place of ampersand

\$

Modified epsilon ligatures - informal, handwritten versions of an et-ligature incorporating an epsilon with a vertical cross bar

For a delightfully quirky read about the ampersand and friends, check out Keith Houston's *Shady Characters: The Secret Life of Punctuation, Symbols, & Other Typographical Marks* (2013).

Also check out:

"The history of the ampersand" by Jonny Gibson. <https://medium.com/black-lion-banner>

wikipedia.org/wiki/Ampersand



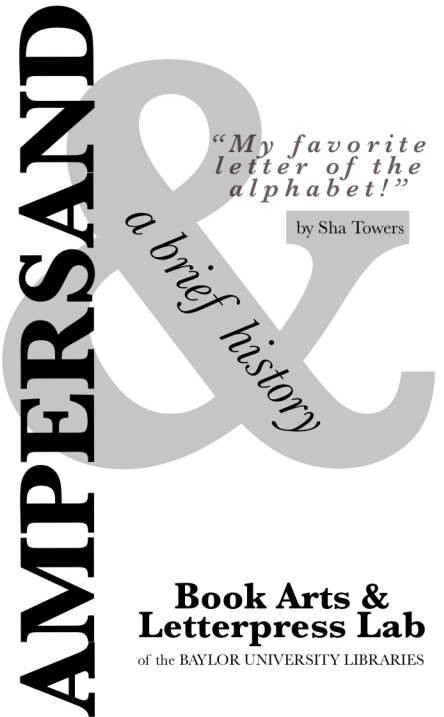
See reverse
for a few
favorite
ampersands!



The Dixie Primer, for the Little Folks. Raleigh, N.C.: Branson, Farrar & Co., 1863.

Though the ligature is ancient, the term we use is a *mondegreen*, a word or phrase resulting from a mishearing, often of something recited or sung, and comes from the 19th century, when the glyph was considered the 27th letter of the alphabet. This, combined with a much older practice of referring to letters that stood alone as words — like *I* and *A* — with the Latin phrase *per se*, meaning “by itself.” Unlike modern-day learners of the alphabet, children in the nineteenth century would conclude the recitation with

“X, Y, Z, and *per se*, And.”



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One of typography's most interesting and unique symbols, the ampersand begins its story in the time of the ancient Romans. The Latin word *et* (meaning “and”) appeared in Roman scribal documents as a cursive shorthand resulting in the joining of the two letters *E* and *T* into a single symbol or glyph - what we now refer to as a ligature. While the most common form of the ampersand (&) masks its Latin origins, the relationship is often more clear in the italic typographic forms, like this example from the Baskerville typeface:



Speedy childhood recitation of “andperseand” resulted in our mondegreen *ampersand* and it stuck ever since, even though its status as an official part of the alphabet did not. It's probably just as well since the rest of the English language alphabet consists of graphemes — symbols that represent individual sounds (phonemes) whereas the ampersand is an example of a logographic symbol that represents a word or morpheme. Logographic writing systems include Chinese characters, Egyptian hieroglyphs, and Sumnerian cuneiforms. So in short, the ampersand is much too cool for our simple alphabet!



Brush Script



Bulmer



Gotham Cond. Black



Goudy Thirty



Engravers Shaded



Futura



Baskerville



Linotype Univers

a few of my favorite ampersands



Bodoni



Companion Old Style



Kennerley



Cloister Black



Village Titling



Companion OS Italic



Cooper Black



Caslon Open Face